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ABSTRACT

Literacy of Navajo Indians within an isolated community of a northeast Arizona Navajo reservation is discussed, based on an ethnographic investigation. Functions for English and Navajo literacy in two community settings where Navajos use standard and vernacular print are described. Using literacy artifacts, participant observation, and interview data collected over six months, attention is also directed to ways of participating in situations where people construct meaning from print; beliefs individuals share about literacy; and roles that institutions and power play in the overall functioning of literacy. Navajos exemplify a traditionally oral people who are both undergoing rapid modernization and, in certain church, school, and home domains, developing uses for vernacular print. Most Navajos, however, do not read and write nearly as effectively as school, business, and government institutions demand. Findings thus far indicate that an oral-literate diglossia exists whereby Navajos typically communicate in Navajo but read and write in English. Interaction within the chapterhouse and the church are discussed and illustrated using chapter notes, field notes, interview transcripts, and excerpts of a communion service. Cochran-Smith's (1984) idea about multiple layers of context is used as a framework for the analysis. The Navajo community's literacy events can be viewed as circles around a center, involving the physical and behavioral structure; functions for speaking, reading, and writing; a level of beliefs; and a level structured by power. (SW)

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LITERACY IN NAVAJOLAND: FUNCTIONS AND EFFECTS OF POWER

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LITERACY IN NAVAJOLAND: FUNCTIONS AND EFFECTS OF POWER

Literacy represents an array of communication skills often deemed essential to academic success and upward mobility. For traditionally oral societies, modernizing forces exert powerful presssures on individuals to develop literacy skills and on groups to develop functions for literacy. For language mincrity groups, there are additional concerns about the development of vernacular literacy and the role it can play in maintaining group language and culture. Navajo Indians exemplify a traditionally oral people who are both undergoing rapid modernization and, in certain church, school, and home domains, developing uses for vernacular print. Most Navajos, however, do not read and write nearly as effectively as school, business, and government institutions demand. Moreover, previous research has indicated "no rush to Navajo literacy" (Young, 1977). Instead, an overall oral-literate diglossia exists whereby Navajos typically communicate in Navajo but read and write in English. This paper describes functions for English and Navajc literacy in community settings where Navajos use standard and vernacular print. Proceeding from participant observation and interview data collected over a six-month period, the analysis details "multiple, concentric layers of context" (Cochran-Smith, 1984) that not only frame Navajo and English literacy events but also structure a model for interpreting literacy events as effects of power.

I. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This paper concerns an ethnographic investigation of literacy, in progress, within an isolated community on the Navajo Reservation in northeast Arizona. Mesa Valley, as I shall call the community, comprises a 400 square mile area that is home to some 1,600 Navajos, most of whom survive on subsistence farming, livestock raising, weaving, and welfare aid from federal and tribal government agencies. Situated among the red-rock cliffs of the Four Corners' high desert plateau, the land is arid and the soil only marginally productive. Unemployment is endemic as there is no industry in the area and only four institutions--the locally-controlled Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) school, Protestant mission church, trading post, and tribal chapterhouse--that provide steady-work ventures. In the sense that opportunity is restricted, Mesa Valley is not unique; estimates of unemployment on the Navajo Reservation as a whole range from 35-80%. Much talk among people in the community speaks to this reality when they say, "What is there here for the young? If they want to make something of themselves, they must leave for town."

While virtually indistinguishable from neighboring reservation communities topographically, in several ways Mesa Valley does stand apart. For the past 15 years, the local K-12 community-controlled school has gained an international reputation for the excellence of its bilingual and biliterate education program. Children, nearly all of whom first come to school with few or no English language skills, learn initial literacy and mathematics concepts in Navajo. Teachers introduce English literacy in the second and

third grades while advancing Navajo literacy skills. Both literacies are taught throughout the upper elementary, junior high, and high school programs, and although there are no standardized tests to measure Navajo literacy proficiency, Mesa Valley children have consistently scored better on English reading, language, and math tests than have children of other Navajo Reservation schools. In addition to vernacular literacy programs developed at the school, for nearly 30 years the local Protestant mission has developed English and Navajo reading materials to spread the word of Christianity. Church members have organized vernacular literacy classes for non-literates, translated portions of the New Testament, and structured church and prayer meeting services that focus on the meanings of holy vernacular texts. The extent to which people use Navajo literacy at the church and school, as well as the relative excellence of the local K-12 school program, make Mesa Valley an ideal place to study how Navajos use English and vernacular literacy.

Only within the past 10 years have theorists of communication begun looking at how whole groups of people use print. The prevailing view had been that the myriad uses of written language need not be considered in that print had no other function than to provide pleasure, an end in itself (Stubbs, 1980:97). However, with the considerable accomplishments of the ethnography of communication over the past 20 years, different scholars called for a sociolinguistics of literacy. Basso (1974:432) asked, "In short, what position does writing occupy in the total communicative economy of the society under study and what is its range of cultural meanings?" Ferguson (1978) emphasized the need to study patterns of literacy in multi-lingual situations. Heath (1982:47) added, "...the study of literacy using

ethnohistorical and ethnographic approaches is critically needed." Those calling for a sociolinguistics of literacy have grounded their call on the work of Hymes, who has provided a research frame (1974:9) for the ethnography of communication.

> Primacy must go to (1) the structure, or system of speech (la parole); (2) function as prior to and warranting structure; (3) language as organized in terms of a plurality of functions; (4) the appropriateness of linguistic elements and messages; (5) diversity of functions of diverse languages and other communicative means; (6) the community or other social context as starting point of analysis and understanding; (7) functions themselves to be warranted in context, and in general the place, boundaries, and organization of language and of other communicative means in a community to be taken as problematic.

To paraphrase Hymes, speech takes primacy over language, and <u>function provides structure</u>. The researcher's task is then to describe communicative events, their functional components, and relationships between functions and events.

My work on the Navajo Reservation derives from the theoretical framework of Hymes, Heath, Ferguson, and Basso, as it more locally derives from previous research on language and literacy among Navajos by Spolsky (1981, 1982). Spolsky has characterized the Navajo Reservation as an example of a "special diglossia" that occurs when different languages are used for writing and for speaking. The unmarked language for oral use between Navajos is Navajo, between Navajos and Anglos, English; the unmarked language for printed communication either between Navajos or Navajos and Anglos is also--but only--English. As Spolsky contends, however, there are two exceptions to an overarching diglossia. One concerns Navajo literacy functioning in churches on the reservation; the other concerns vernacular literacy developments at

several community-controlled reservation schools. Navajo literacy was introduced first by missionaries in the early part of this century, and it enjoyed a brief flowering in the late '30s and '40s, ironically, when a standard orthography was developed and used to explain massively unpopular BIA stock reduction policies. Navajo literacy still functions in various church settings, and with the self-determination movement of the '60s and '70s, vernacular print continues to be used in a handful of reservation schools. Overall, though, Navajo print has not caught on. Spolsky's reasoning for the general non-acceptance of vernacular literacy is this: Navajo print was introduced by alien institutions which structured non-indigenous uses for the language, and what appears as a non-acceptance of vernacular reading and writing has in fact effectively insured for the integrity of the oral culture, in that oral and written functions neatly divide according to the special diglossic situation Spolsky has described.

This study, now at its mid-point, stems from and goes beyond Spolsky's previous investigations. I have worked to test an hypothesized special diglossia and to describe the complexity of factors that influence the functioning of literacy in settings where Navajos use both English and Navajo print. The principle tools available for the study come from the ethnography of communication: collection of literacy artifacts, participant observation, interviews, and repetitive analysis of all forms of data. With these tools, I have been looking into the functions of English and Navajo print at Mesa Valley, ways of participating in situations where people construct meaning from print, beliefs individuals share about literacy, and roles institutions and power play in the overall functioning of literacy. Findings thus far

generally confirm Spolsky's notion of the diglossic functioning of oral and written uses for English and Navajo languages. At the same time, the analysis of data, based on notions of power developed by Foucault (1980) and "layers of context" explained by Cochran-Smith (1984), describes literacy events not so much structured by functions of communication but rather infused by power arrangements between groups and between individuals. In this paper, I will argue that function does not provide structure; instead, power as an effect of social relationships and institutions constitutes the very functioning of communication. My task, then, is not so much to place an understanding of literacy at Mesa Valley into functional constructs that reduce its complexity, but to grasp how print becomes imbued with power and to describe how effects of power become manifest.

II. THE CHAPTERHOUSE

At Mesa Valley, four institutions in addition to homes comprise settings where people read, write, and speak from print: the community-controlled K-12 school, trading post, church, and chapterhouse. The last of these four is the seat of local tribal government, where Navajos of the Mesa Valley area meet ostensibly to discuss community news, local problems, and governmental program developments as they effect Mesa Valley inhabitants. Chapter meetings are held bimonthly on Sunday afternoons, and while starting times for the meetings are occasionally announced with an English sign posted on the trading post door, people tend to hear of the meeting's start-up time and any interesting items on the agenda by word of mouth. Four officers elected quadrennially oversee chapter meeting proceedings: a president,

vice-president, secretary-treasurer, and council delegate, who represents the chapter district on a reservation-wide council in the Navajo Nation's capital at Window Rock. The president and vice-president literally run the meetings, keeping speakers and spectators on track of the agenda. The secretary-treasurer posts the agenda, reads previous meeting abstracts, takes minutes, and handles chapter accounts.

What follows is a chapterhouse interaction sequence as captured in my fieldnotes.

> It's 3:45, yet according to the English written sign put up at the trading post, the meeting is supposed to have begun at 10 this morning. The chapter secretary is only now writing the agenda in English on the chapterhouse blackboard... Before the secretary has finished writing, the chapter president gives the call to order, as usual, in Navajo. All other conversation is also in Navajo. The chapter secretary gives the invocation, a three-minute barely audible Native American Church prayer. When he finishes, the chapter secretary reads the minutes, written in English, from the previous meeting. We vote to approve the minutes, 42-0. Next is the reading of the agenda. The chapter vice-president gets up from his seat on the official's dais and, pointing to each agenda item, explains in Navajo what will be discussed for the next 5-6 hours, taking several minutes to detail what each item means. The vote is unanimously in favor of accepting the agenda.
>
> Now, under "new business", I am asked to present my request for GED program supply monies. I do so in English; the vice-president translates. Following the translation, one community member is recognized by the president and asks who will teach the classes. A second person voices support for the program. A third cautions that students should buy their own materials. A fourth describes how he had to provide his own study materials for GED class in Farmington. All this is in Navajo, and I struggle to follow.
>
> Finally, an older man is recognized. Later, the vice-president described his 20 minute talk like this. "He was going to ask a question, make a suggestion. But first he started introducing himself. Then he had to greet us all. Then he has to talk about his past, and he told us he didn't know about the meeting at first... He got to the point when everybody started to sit back. He should have come up, greeted us all, do his introduction real quick, then stick to the point... He was telling us what he was doing all day, where he was

before the meeting. It takes them a long time to adjust to the main problem. I think it's in the Navajo tradition." The speaker ends his talk, joking about his own discursiveness, "For us Navajos, for each word, there is a long story."

The ethnographer's most basic task is to figure out what's going on in a cultural milieu (McDermott, 1982). At the chapterhouse, I suggest that there are levels of things going on, layers of context (Cochran-Smith, 1984:6), that can be analyzed and stripped back in order to arrive at the meanings of chapter meeting events. There are immediate contexts of time, space, and participant structure. In spite of the fact that meetings always start later than advertised, time is formulaically scheduled along agenda lines. The invocation proceeds the reading of previous meeting minutes and the agenda; announcements follow; then come new and old business. The spatial arrangement of chapter meetings, not to mention the architecture of the chapter building itself, organizes a whole set of signs conveying the idea that a chapter meeting is taking place. Chapter officers sit at one end of a rectangular hall behind a raised dais. Spectators sit on rows of folded chairs facing the officers. A blackboard upon which the secretary-treasurer has written the agenda rests behind the officers' dais so that everyone at any time can see what people are talking about, what business has transpired, and what will come next. In addition to time and space considerations, there is an immediate context of participant structure. Officers speak with microphones through a sound amplification system that provides literal control of the floor, as speakers from the audience must first be recognized by individuals on the dais. And, of course, all talk is in Navajo.

The spatial, temporal, and participatory constraints operating upon chapterhouse communicants, binding together those who speak as well as those who do not, make up a first layer of context, a system of control of discourse that approximates institutionalized ritual. The ritual control of speech at this level has the effect of prohibiting thoughts and opinions that individuals express elsewhere about chapter proceedings. Talk similar to what follows from an interview with one community member hardly ever happens in chapter meetings:

> I got a lot of things against the chapter, the chapter officials. For one thing, they are not there most of the time. They should be there, carrying on business... The only time we see the officials is when we have a meeting or something is going on. They all work, have other jobs. There is a conflict of interest. The whole chapter operation is kind of slowed down. We're kind of behind on everything, every issue, like this chapter manager. We could have picked out this person a long time ago, but they're still advertising again, and there's lot of people that have applications in, already still there, processed. I don't know who they're waiting for, maybe somebody they can manipulate.

When discourse beyond the boundary of ritual acceptability does arise inside the chapterhouse, institutional procedures for the control of speech come to a fore. On one occasion, an individual estranged from most of the Mesa Valley community, widely accused of practicing witchcraft, and involved with the losing side of a land dispute which chapter officers were arbitrating, literally stormed a chapter meeting:

> ...You [officials] are all f_____ thieves! You are only thinking about yourselves, not trying to help people. And you, my relatives, who are you fooling? You're not helping me... This guy, [me, taking notes], what's he doing here? He's just ripping us off, going to get his papers, then leave....

After a prolonged outburst, the estranged individual left the scene of the

chapter meeting and returned with a gun to threaten the lives of meeting officials. He was finally subdued, arrested, incarcerated, and condemned by all for his threats against the lives of community members, yet many people recognized that what he was saying was "not far from the truth."

A second layer of context, more abstract than the first but still concerned with the "what" of what goes on at chapter meetings, is about functions for oral and written communication. Typologies of communicative functions follow, deriving from the chapter interaction sequence described above as well as other observations and interviews. Functional categories stem from the combined lists of Halliday (1975) and John-Steiner and Roth (1983).

CHAPTERHOUSE ORAL COMMUNICATION--FUNCTIONS AND LANGUAGE

1. Instrumental; language as a means of getting things, satisfying material needs.
2. Regulatory; controlling the behavior, feelings, and attitudes of others.
3. Interactional; getting along with others, establishing relative status.
4. Personal; expressing individuality, pleasure, anger.
5. Heuristic; seeking and testing knowledge.
6. Representational; communicating information, description, expressing propositions.
7. Divertive; joking.
8. Authoritative/contractual; stipulating laws, regulations, agreements, contracts.
9. Perpetuating; making records, notes, minutes.
10. Valuative; confirming personal beliefs, praying.

CHAPTERHOUSE ORAL READING--FUNCTIONS, TYPES, AND LANGUAGE OF ARTIFACTS

1. Authoritative/contractual; stipulating laws, regulations, agreements, contracts.
   - Proposal abstracts (from English texts to oral Navajo)
   - Memoranda from federal, state, and tribal governments (from English texts to oral Navajo)
2. Representational; communicating information, description, expressing propositions.
   - Agendae (from English texts to oral Navajo)
   - Minutes (from English texts to oral Navajo)
   - Notes (from English texts to oral Navajo)

- Notices (from English texts to oral Navajo)

CHAPTERHOUSE READING--FUNCTIONS TYPES, AND LANGUAGE OF ARTIFACTS

1. Authoritative/contractual; stipulating laws, regulations, agreements, contracts.
   - Requests for proposals (English)
   - Memoranda (English)
   - Order forms (English)
2. Regulatory; controlling the behavior, feelings, and attitudes of others.
   - Chapterhouse policies (English)
3. Representational; communicating information, description, expressing propositions
   - Minutes (English)
   - Agendae (English)
   - Proposals (English)
   - Notices (English)
   - Help-wanted ads (English)
   - Advertisements (English)
   - WIC posters (English)
   - Calenders (English)
   - Newspapers (English)
4. Memory/representational; written preservation of objective and subjective aspects of experience.
   - Lists (English)
5. Divertive; reading for pleasure.
   - Newspapers (English)
   - Novels (English)

CHAPTERHOUSE WRITING--FUNCTIONS, TYPES, AND LANGUAGE OF ARTIFACTS

1. Authoritative/contractual; stipulating laws, regulations, agreements, contracts.
   - Proposals (English)
   - Requisition forms (English)
2. Regulatory; controlling the behavior, feelings, and attitudes of others.
   - Policies (English)
3. Representational; communicating information, description, expressing propositions.
   - Agendae (English)
   - Minutes (English)
   - Notices (English)
   - Help-wanted ads (English)
   - Calenders (English)
   - Notices of ceremonies (English)

In the chapter interaction sequence, there is a functional layer of context in addition to considerations of time, space, and participant structure. The

writing and reading of the agenda, the reading of the previous meeting minutes, and the announcement of a plan to spend GED program funds signify representational functions of literacy, each of which concerns the oral exchange of information and expression of propositions structured from a written text. Representational functions for reading and orally presenting written texts characterize chapterhouse activities such that participants orally negotiate the meaning of print in ways described in the interaction sequence, while behind the scenes of the meetings themselves, authoritative/contractual uses for print predominate. The chapter delegate writes proposals for funding various community development projects. The secretary-treasurer and vice-president fill out program requisition forms and meeting minutes in order to procure funding and comply with tribal law.

Both representational and authoritative/contractual functions find expression in English. With a functional understanding of chapterhouse communication, it is possible to conclude that chapter meeting participants use oral Navajo for the oral negotiation of meaning while English print remains the medium of knowledge and power. To jump to this conclusion and stop, however, is to confuse the "what" of what's going on with the "how". Functions of communication do not beget power, nor do they provide structure to what goes on. A functional understanding of communication does not explain why functions exist as they do.

A next level of context develops as people share beliefs about what they perceive to be happening. Here is part of an interview conducted with the chapter vice-president:

Would you say it's more important to speak at the chapter to get things done or to do things through print?

To me, I would do it in print. I would do it in black and white, have records and have files. Just speaking, we had the experience, one of the chapter officers went to Window Rock. I told him we should have the trip on record. Have it on paper. He just took off and went over there. He tried to get something verbal. He didn't get it. Then I ended up writing papers for him. That's how it goes. Nowadays, you got to put it in black and white in Window Rock...

What would you call your job?

Well, I was told by one of the Window Rock officials--I think he was observing me or something--he told me [when I was secretary-treasurer] that I did 80% of the chapter president's job. At that time, my president wasn't educated. He didn't know how to make phone calls. He didn't know how to write. He didn't know how to speak English. I been doing translating for him, responding to letters for him. I been doing all his interpreting with him. That's how the official meant it. And the vice-president, the same for him. Also for the vice-president. They told me I done 50% of his job. My achievement award, I think it's through the interpretation, the letter writing for them. They didn't know how to do paperwork.

Here is part of an interview with the council delegate after I had spent a day observing the tribal council in Window Rock:

Is there any Navajo literacy in the council?

No, none. There's talk in Navajo, of course, but it's all translated into English, and all of the minutes, everything, is in English. Where's the need now that most council members are literate in English?

How do you present to the chapter all of the things written in English?

You got to do it very simply. It's really different. In English at the council chambers, you can get right to the point. But talking with grassroots people, you got to stretch it out, give lots of examples. Otherwise, they don't know what you're talking about. Take the idea of "team-work". That word or idea just doesn't exist in Navajo. So when you say "team-work" to older, non-educated traditional people, you got to tell them it's like this--you got a wagon with a team of four horses. If one falls down on the job, then the other three must work twice as hard. They all need each other.

Sort of like t'áá aníílʔtso?

Sort of, but you got to give lots of examples.

And here is part of an interview with a former chapter official and regular participant in chapter meetings:

Why do chapter meetings always start late?

I guess people just kind of lost interest. People made all kinds of promises, and now they're discouraged about it. They don't want to come.

Are these promises new?

No, they're, the council delegate before, he made a lot of, he's not educated. People feel that with no education or no understanding of English, a lot of things, problems, projects that come from the chapter officials, he was just letting them go through. He doesn't know anything about all these money allocations. Him not being educated, he just let a whole lot of things slip through.

Who was saying that?

The people. That's why they kind of elect [the present council delegate]. He's a businessman, educated.

It was a close election. 270 to 250 votes. Seemed like that election pretty much split the community, huh?

Uh, huh.

What kind of split is it, or is there a split? Am I reading that right?

Yes, there is. [The present councilman] kind of won having the young people vote for im. And there's clanship involved, too. If he's related to me, I'll vote for him. That's how they'll vote, not on how a person is as a leader. If he is the same clan as you, or he's a relative of you, you'll vote for him.

At Mesa Valley, there is a general consensus of opinion that people in positions of power at the chapter need to be able to speak, read, and write English well. The chapter vice-president receives an achievement award for doing most of the literacy-related work around the chapter which his cohorts, because they do not read, write, or speak English well, cannot do. The

council delegate tells how he must translate English texts of the tribal council into "stretched out" Navajo speech. The former chapter official describes why the community recently voted out a monolingual, non-literate Navajo as council delegate in favor of a young, literate businessman experienced in the ways and wiles of tribal government. Teachers and parents exhort children with similar truths, that English language and literacy skills are prerequisite to young people's "making something of themselves" so they will "have power over their own destinies".

The allusions to literacy and power beg the question: what <u>is</u> power at Mesa Valley? The facile understanding of what goes on at the chapterhouse gives rise to the view that power is commensurate with abilities to mediate between government institutions and the local population effectively by means of English print and oral Navajo. Casual typologies, however, deny the complex interplay of strategies, roles, institutions, and cultural preferences that weave together to form a cultural milieu. Some people confer power according to clan responsibilities as when, for example, they back a clan relative running for public office. Others support elders, based on traditional notions of respect for old age and knowledge. Still others are able to get a power line put in, a land dispute settled, or other favorable action from chapter officers on a quid pro quo basis, in exchange for favors rendered in the past or even knowledge that the supplicant has about gate-keepers' personal lives. Seen in this light, literacy then is not so much a monolithic source of power, the functions of which structure the "said" of social interaction; rather, it is just one more strategy of power, indeed an effect of power irreducible from other concurrent effects.

III. THE CHURCH

Before addressing the question of literacy and power directly, I want to narrate a second interaction sequence from observations of a Mesa Valley Lutheran church service. The church was founded as an evangelical mission in the '50s when there was no paved access to Mesa Valley and the area was commensurately more isolated than it is today. Since that time, the mission has grown to include 90 confirmed members of its congregation. An Anglo pastor and his family, who moved to Mesa Valley from the upper mid-west in 1965, have directed church operations, while four Navajo lay preachers preside over Sunday morning Navajo church services.

Here is the church interaction sequence taken directly from my fieldnotes:

> The service begins with three Navajo hymns read from the Navajo hymnal, led by [one of the Navajo lay preachers] whose task today is to deliver the message. He asks for prayer requests, and then reads from notes that members of the congregation have left for him at the lecturn. One person has been hit by a car in Phoenix. Another has been involved in an accident nearby. A third request comes from an older, monolingual Navajo lady. The pastor reads directly from her note, "I'd like to request a song for my husband. His birthday is next week. Also, I'd like to request a special hymn for my daughter, F. Her birthday is this Thursday." How did she write the note? Who might have written it for her?
>
> We pray for those requesting prayer, sing two more Navajo hymns, and then a [second Navajo lay preacher] comes to the lecturn with his Navajo and English Bibles and 3-ring notebook, into which he outlines his Navajo sermon with English notes. He begins to deliver this morning's sermon, starting in English, "In this world where thousands die in India, Mexico, where miners die in Utah, there is still Christians and God." Switching into Navajo, he reads from John 3(16), "Háálá Diyin God éí nohokáá' dine'é t'áá'íiyisí ayóó'ájóníigon baa haye' t'ááłá'i há yizhchínígíí baazhníłtí, áko t'áá háiida boodlaago ba'ólíhígíí éí doo ádoodiił da, ndi iiná doo nínt'i'ii bee hóló dooleeł." Whosoever believes and accepts the word of God will not perish. People in the congregation follow with their own Navajo texts, some underlining as the preacher reads.

The preacher continues with a reading of John 1(14), again from the Navajo text. "Saadígíí eí diné dzizlíí, áádóó ajooba' dóó t'áá'aanínii hwii hadeezbingo nihitahgóó kéehojit'íí nt'éé; aTaa' nilínii t'áázá'í bá yizhchínígíí yee ayóó'át'éii bee ayóó'ájít'éhígíí danil'íí." The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. Then Romans 6(23). "Háálá Diyin God bich'į' adił ni'iidzíih éí aniné niyiilé, ndi Jesus Christ nihiBóhólníihii bee Diyin God éí iiná nint'i'ii t'áá jíík'e nihainílá." For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life. After each reading of the Navajo biblical verse, the preacher translates into English. For 35 minutes, he explains what these verses mean. I summarize his Navajo, "I used to be lost. I used to drink. I used to question the existence of God. I had everything while I really had nothing. But the Bible changed the direction of my life." He ends in English, "The Bible is the direction of our life. If we follow that direction, our life will be long. A person will change his behavior, his values, his lifestyle, everything, when he becomes a true believer."

At the church as in the chapterhouse, there are layers of context, the most immediate of which concern time, space, and participant structure. Time is organized according to expectations the Anglo pastor and the congregation have negotiated over the years about what should happen in church services, who should lead various aspects of the services, and how long whole services should take. Anglos working at the church make frequent reference to the fact that "things work on Indian time," meaning that all aspects of Navajo worship take longer than its English language counterpart held every Sunday evening for benefit of those who speak only English. In fact, this is true. English services last no longer than one hour. Navajo services, on the other hand, tend to last twice as long, many times, longer. Yet despite differences between them, ritual elements of time, space, and participation infuse both kinds of church worship. Both Navajo and English services open ritually on time; hymns mark beginnings; prayer requests follow; hymns and

scripture readings come before the sermon which prefigures still more hymns, offerings, announcements, and finally the benediction. The spatial and participatory arrangements of services evidence ritual organization, too. Members of the congregation sit in rows facing a raised alter upon which sit a crucifix and an open Navajo Bible. To the left and front of the alter is a raised lecturn. Lighting and seating direct members' attention forward to where speakers address the congregation with the aid of a sound amplification system. Speakers gain access to the floor by gaining access to the lecturn. And while there is sometimes code-switching from Navajo to English, Navajo is the unmarked language as members of the congregation speak.

Temporal, spatial, and participatory constraints that bind together worshippers make up a first layer of context that specifies acceptable types of discourse and render distinguishable true and false statements. Indeed, most aspects of church services are all about truth--the importance of accepting the word of God as stipulated in the Bible as truth, accepting the Bible as a virtual blueprint for living, as the following excerpt from a communion service shows:

> Pastor: Now, will you please answer these three questions to confirm your belief in Jesus Christ, the Holy Son of God. Do you confess that you have sinned in the eyes of God?
>
> Congregation: Yes.
>
> Pastor: Do you agree to accept the Bible as the true Word of God?
>
> Congregation: Yes.
>
> Pastor: Do you agree to live your life according to the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ as written in the Bible?
>
> Congregation: Yes.

These crucial questions outline a series of constraints which organize space, time, and participation at the church. Spatially, the congregationalist's focus is constantly directed toward the crucifix and leaders of the service, who admonish the weak of faith and applaud those of strong belief that theirs is the true way. The temporal and participatory organization of services serve in like fashion, to focus spectators' attention on testimony in praise of God and truth of the teachings of the Bible, which, as the sermoner above is quick to remind, have the power to change one's whole way of living.

A functional layer of context underpins the more topographical features of space, time, and participant structure. What follows is a functional analysis of oral and written communication, again, using descriptive categories of Halliday (1975) and John-Steiner and Roth (1983).

CHURCH ORAL COMMUNICATION--FUNCTIONS AND LANGUAGE

1. Instrumental; language as a means of getting things, satisfying material needs.
2. Interactional; getting along with others, establishing relative status.
3. Personal; expressing individuality, pleasure, anger.
4. Heuristic; seeking and testing knowledge.
5. Representational; communicating information, description, expressing propositions.
6. Divertive; joking.
7. Valuative; confirming personal beliefs, sermonizing, praying.
8. Regulatory; controlling the behavior, feelings, and attitudes of others.

CHURCH ORAL READING--FUNCTIONS, TYPES, AND LANGUAGE OF ARTIFACTS

1. Heuristic; seeking and testing knowledge.
   - Scripture readings (from written English and Navajo to oral Navajo)
   - Bible readings during sermons (from written English and Navajo to oral Navajo)
2. Representational; communicating information, description, expressing propositions.
   - Weekly calenders (English)
   - Monthly calenders (English)

3. Valuative; confirming personal beliefs, praying.
   - Hymn singing (English and Navajo)

CHURCH READING--FUNCTIONS, TYPES, AND LANGUAGE OF ARTIFACTS

1. Authoritative/contractual; stipulating laws, regulations, agreements, contracts.
   - By-laws (English)
2. Regulatory; controlling the behavior, feelings, and attitudes of others.
   - Sunday school teachers' responsibilities (English)
3. Representational; communicating information, description, expressing propositions.
   - Schedules (English)
   - Calenders (English)
   - Notices (English)
   - Church newsletter (English)
   - Notes (English)
4. Valuative; confirming personal beliefs, praying.
   - Bible (English and Navajo)
   - Biblical pictographs and pamphlets (English and Navajo)
   - Hymnal (English and Navajo)

CHURCH WRITING--FUNCTIONS, TYPES, AND LANGUAGE OF ARTIFACTS

1. Authoritative/contractual; stipulating laws, regulations, agreements, contracts.
   - By-laws (English)
2. Regulatory; controlling the behavior, feelings, and attitudes of others.
   - Sunday school teachers' responsibilities (English)
3. Representational; communicating information, description, expressing propositions.
   - Schedules (English)
   - Calenders (English)
   - Notices (English)
   - Notes (English)
   - Church newsletter (English)
4. Heuristic; seeking and testing knowledge.
   - Bible translations and condensations (from English into Navajo)

When functional categories are used to analyze what is going on in the church interaction sequence above, a functional diglossia becomes apparent. Worshippers begin the church service by reading and singing songs from a Navajo hymnal in ways that speak of valuative purposes, praying and confirming personal beliefs. During prayer requests, members of the

congregation communicate information and express prayer propositions representationally by leaving notes at the preacher's lecturn. Valuative and heuristic functions for literacy characterize scripture readings during the sermon, when the lay preacher points out how the Bible turned his life around and what meanings specific Biblical passages contain for all good Christians. In these instances, valuative and heuristic functions find expression in Navajo, whereas English is the medium for representational uses. Navajo is the language of values confirmation; English, the language of representations, regulations, laws, and agreements.

At first glance, it is possible to conclude that English is the language of power and knowledge at the church, while Navajo remains the medium of faith and religious conversion--in much the manner that Spolsky has hypothesized; but while this argument may gloss what goes on with print at Mesa Valley, it reduces the complexities of how people use print and take meanings from Biblical passages which then specify direction in individuals' lives. "A person will change his behavior, his values, his lifestyle, everything when he becomes a believer," the preacher said above. To understand how this might happen, that which people believe about Christianity, the Bible, and Navajo print, needs to be heard.

Here is an interview with one of the church's lay preachers:

> The Bible and its teachings, to me, is really life, where the word of the teachings, you take it and live by it. It's not just you hear about it every Sunday and go out the door and forget about it. It's kind of, ah, refreshing, that spiritual part every Sunday. So that's what I'm trying to push every time I preach. You may be doing something right, but have you repent, have you committed yourself to the Lord, which is not just doing the right thing? There's a verse in the Bible that I will be using tonight [to preach at the English

language service]. A rich young man comes to Jesus and says, "What can I do to be saved, to get eternal life?" And Jesus said, "You know about the Laws of Moses? 'Thou shall not kill, thou shall not do all these other things'?" What he said was get rid of those things which will interfere with your total committment...

So, the Bible is not to be read just as another book, but it really has to be/

/Applied to one's life. You have to live in order to teach somebody else. You have to take it, live it, and carry it to the people. If you just learn it, you can have it in your head, but it's only as strong as you actually live by it. People see your actions. I'm using a verse tonight from James. He talks about "you do-ers of the Word"; you're not going to be hearers only, deceiving yourself. Another verse says, "Faith without action is death."

Here is part of another interview with an individual who considers himself "holding back" from the teachings of the church, but who nonetheless attends services regularly because his wife remains devout:

What are the important things to becoming a, what are the things you have to change, I guess, to become a Christian when you are Navajo?

You got to change your old ways, your old beliefs, traditional ways, do away with all these taboos and what not. It's a hard thing.

What are some of the things you have to accept?

New things? Well, from what I heard, you become a new person, born again. It's kind of hard for me to say. To be a born-again Christian, you got to start a new life. You were born this way, and you make a 90 degree turn. Forget about your old ways, try to be a new person.

Can you tell me about what it's been like for you to do that? How do you see yourself? As a traditional Navajo? As a Christian Navajo?

I been away from this community for quite a time. In my earlier years, I spent most of my time in boarding school, then I was in the service. In '68, I came back to the reservation. So, I'm saying, I'm not traditional in my religion. I haven't called myself Christian yet because I still have these faults, these sins I do, guilt. I do a lot of things, a lot of bad thinking. I don't consider myself a Christian yet. I'm still learning.

How does the Bible play in this?

The Bible's just, ah, they claim it's all these stories written by

Almighty God. When you read it, I guess you got to read it, but sometimes it's hard to understand it. Some people have different interpretation of it, and my reading doesn't always come out right with me. And for Christians, you got to read the Bible. That's just like being in contact with the Lord through reading, through the Bible. You converse with God when you read the book, you talk with God indirectly. That's how I feel about it.

And finally, this, from a different interview with the same lay preacher quoted above. In addition to preaching at the church and teaching at the community school, he has translated portions of the New Testament from English into Navajo:

<u>You have translated the Book of Mark into Navajo, and many look at you as a writer of Navajo. What do you think about Navajo literacy in general?</u>

At church, it is necessary because some of the people who didn't get a formal education, they can read. My mother can. My aunts, grandmother, cousins, they can read in Navajo even though they can't read in English. So with church, it's good when that need and importance of learning is there. But for students, I can't say for sure whether they will really need it, other than just maintaining your identity and you can speak the Navajo language. Children can spend a lot of time doing those Navajo literacy activities. What they learn, yes, can be carried across to English. But somewhere along the line, again, it's a little bit of hinderance involved in it. If they go out to Farmington, Flagstaff, off of the reservation, it's all in English and it's going to be written in English...

<u>If someone were to ask all the adults in this community what they thought about Navajo literacy, what would they say?</u>

They'd say, "We already speak Navajo. We already think Navajo. Now we want our children to learn English so they can find jobs." That's all they can say.

Each of the interviewees speaks of truths. For the preacher and the person "holding back", the Bible provides direction and a true path to salvation. Even as Biblical stories remain open to interpretation, the truth of sayings and passages has the power to alleviate human suffering if one believes. Truth of a different sort structures the functioning of Navajo print.

According to the Bible translator at Mesa Valley, there is no need and write vernacular literacy beyond that required to reach non-English speaking Navajos with the Word of God. Children need not learn Navajo literacy in schools, nor should time be spent trying to create uses for vernacular print in other locales when the larger world reads and writes English.

Truths speak of power. Foucault writes, "'Truth' is linked in circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it" (1980:133). Mechanisms of power at the chapterhouse included the spatial and temporal organization of meetings, ways people participate, abilities to read and write, plus different strategies for conferring power and deferring to powerful others. Mechanisms of power at the church include similar topographic arrangements plus apparatuses of a different nature. People become empowered after accepting the truths of valuative texts written in English and Navajo. In both the church and chapterhouse contexts, functions of communication do not so much mold what goes on; they reflect underlying tensions, techniques, and procedures that enable participants to recognize true from false statements. Functions do not warrant structure in either instance. Instead, systems of power allow for truths and effects of power to become manifest, functions of literacy being one such effect.

IV. POWER AND LITERACY

I want to turn directly to literacy, ways of taking meaning, functions, and power. When the chapterhouse and church interaction sequences are approached from the standpoint of ways people take meaning from written texts, it is

apparent that two very different "ways" are going on. In the chapterhouse sequence, there is over an hour of dialogue about the meaning, efficacy, and overall worth of the written plan, presented orally, to spend chapter funds on a GED program. This is a life-to-text process (Cochran-Smith, 1984:169) wherein chapter participants apply their background knowledge to make sense of a written text. Recall the description of the older man who spoke for 20 minutes about the GED spending proposal:

> "He was going to ask a question, make a suggestion. But first he started introducing himself. Then he had to greet us all. Then he has to talk about his past, and he told us he didn't know about the meeting at first... He was telling us what he was doing all day, where he was before the meeting...."

The way participants take meaning in the church sequence is fundamentally different. As the preacher guides listeners in their extension and application of Biblical passages to immediate experience, a text-to-life process (Ibid) proceeds. From Bible readings and sermons, as in the example below, listeners and readers find guidance about how to structure their lives:

> Our church is accountable to us, to teach us the proper conduct that we use, and also to teach us to be do-ers and not hearers only. And the end of the service should be the beginning of our ministry for our Lord Jesus Christ. The end of the sermon should be a readjustment on our part; not just a message, leave it at that. James, chapter 2, verse 17, it says, "Faith without action is death." If we believe the Almighty God, we cannot stay still [with] what we believe. We can live. A person who hears the word, who doesn't believe with his heart, but confesses with his mouth, "Yes, I believe," then he begins to show. Whatever he does, he begins to show.
>
> What this verse means [is], a person can say, "Yes, I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and I pray for everybody out there. That's all." But a person should take time to stop and go out to people. That's how we are appointed as the children of God. We have a mission. That is to share the word with other people. What we hear, we apply to our lives. Then we can teach the word and reinforce it with our own

example...."

In the chapter sequence, readers and listeners orally negotiate what a text says by rendering opinions, applying additional information, and expressing propositions about the printed word. This life-to-text process is understood functionally as a representational use of literacy. In the church sermon, the speaker confirms personal beliefs and sketches out the manner by which his understandings must be understood by others. In functional terms, his text-to-life reading fulfills a valuative purpose for print.

Underlying ways of taking meaning and functions of literacy are systems and effects of power, which structure a continuum of "non-focused" to "focused" situations (Scollon & Scollon, 1980:27-8) that manifest different ways of taking meaning from print. Non-focused situations are those in which meaning remains negotiable; focused situations are those in which meaning is carefully limited. Central to non-focused interactions is the dialogical construction of meaning. "The key to focused situations," on the other hand, "is the non-negotiated, unilateral process of making sense" (Ibid:27). To ask what makes for focused situations is to ask what makes for systems of power. At Mesa Valley, abilities to read, write, translate, and speak effectively from English and Navajo texts comprise elements of power systems. Being able to "stretch out" representational and authoritative/contractual kinds of English print into oral Navajo and being able to engage government offices with similar functions for writing confer distinct political powers: individuals with these abilities are chosen to lead at the chapterhouse and represent the community in Window Rock. Abilities to read figure heavily in church interactions, too, as the truth of Christian knowledge is constantly

grounded in Biblical texts and interpretations. This is not to say, however, that literacy abilities constitute the only, even the most important, elements in systems of power at Mesa Valley. Institutions with their temporal, spatial, and participatory constraints structure powerful instances when individuals using one or another element of power can focus the meaning of a written or oral text. Clanship structures rights and obligations which bind community spokesmen and supporters alike. And most importantly, in a small community such as Mesa Valley where nearly all local news travels by word-of-mouth, the knowledge people have of an individual's private life, the "dirt" as one informant called it, structures and transforms possibilities of power, situations wherein the individual can impress upon others that his or her version of the truth is right.

V. CONCLUSION

I have argued that multiple layers of context, an idea developed by Cochran-Smith (1984:1-7), envelopes literacy events at Mesa Valley. These events are surrounded and structured by a physical and behavioral framework of space, time, and participant structure; activities which delineate functions for oral and written communication; a belief system about literacy, in which are embedded notions about standard and vernacular print as well as their relationships to political, economic, and spiritual accomplishment; and systems of power, elements of which include literacy abilities, clanship ties, and knowledge. Another way to understand these layers of context is to borrow an image directly from Cochran-Smith (Ibid:7) and to think of circles around a center that represents Mesa Valley literacy events. A first ring

surrounding and structuring the center derives from the immediate context which signals physical and behavioral constraints for the use and interpretation of written communication. A second, supporting ring derives from activities that delineate functions for speaking, reading, and writing. A third level of beliefs surrounds and supports the inner two rings. Finally, all of the inner rings are enveloped and structured by power. As the model suggests, all of the layers of context envelop, or are enveloped by, other layers of context; for investigative purposes, each layer confirms and raises hypotheses about the others.

From this initial analysis of Mesa Valley literacy practices, many questions remain. Spolsky's notion of a special diglossia, the idea that Navajos speak Navajo but read and write English--with only school and church related exceptions, is tentatively confirmed, but there are isolated instances of students writing letters in Navajo and at least one individual writing descriptions of Navajo ceremonies in the vernacular. What other instances of Navajo literacy are there? Ways of taking meaning differ in chapterhouse and church contexts, where participants construct meaning dialogically in the former instance but accept received truths in the latter. What happens in school, trading post, and home contexts? When children must learn skills using texts that focus meaning, so that one and only one answer to a comprehension question can be correct, are they prepared by similar experiences in non-school contexts? And finally, what of interpretation itself as an effect of power? The reader hears of Mesa Velley informants through my voice, my understanding of their understandings. The reinterpretation of interpretations of Navajo speech and literacy events

oblidge the reader to engage in my frame of reference about what constitutes Navajo reality, and of consequence, power. Geertz (in Hymes, 1982:31) captures the essence of this last question precisely:

> Confinement to experience-near concepts leaves an ethnographer awash in immediacies, as well as entangled in vernacular. Confinement to experience-distant ones leaves him stranded in abstractions and smothered in jargon. The real question...is how..., in each case, ought one to deploy [the two sorts of concepts]...so as to produce an interpretation of the way a people lives which is neither imprisoned within their mental horizons...nor systematically deaf to the distinctive tonalites of their existence.

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